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AUTHOR	Higgerson, Mary Lou
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ABSTRACT

A study investigated what organizational communication students learned from case simulations and role playing. Seniors and graduate students enrolled in two different 400-level courses taught in the Department of Speech Communication at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale engaged in different detailed case simulations that required them to work in small groups to analyze the case, develop a method for managing the case situation, and present their conclusions to the specific characters in the case study. The case roles were played by the course instructor and other students in the class. At the conclusion of the case study simulation, students were asked to assess the value of the case simulation as an instructional method on an open-ended survey instrument. A total of 14 students from one course and 21 students from the other course completed and returned the survey instrument. Results indicated that the case method when employed as a case simulation helped students learn and develop professional skills. Findings suggest avenues for more research including: the study should be replicated in more courses with more students; there is a need to compare students' self-report assessments with instructor assessments of what students learn from a case simulation; there is a need to study the value of using case simulations for long-term learning; and there is a need to study the scope and effectiveness of case simulation as an instructional method. (Contains 10 references; appendixes present the two case simulations and data summaries from the two courses.) (RS)

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Case Studies and Role Playing as a Vehicle to the Real World[1]

by

Mary Lou Higgerson
Professor
Department Speech Communication
Southern Illinois University at Carbondale
Carbondale, Illinois 62901-6605

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Instructors of organizational communication often use case studies to allow students to observe how theory operates in a "real world" context. The case method which combines case study use with role play or some other interactive format enables students to practice their communication skills as they apply theoretical concepts in a simulated organizational context. These experiences can be more valuable than learning through work experience because students assume the roles of both first person participant and third person observer. Students learn to critically analyze their own behavior in managing complex issues and tasks. The case method allows students to apply specific knowledge while they practice their professional skills in a realistic, but risk-free environment.

By understanding what students gain from these experiences, instructors of organizational communication will be able to structure case simulations that more fully maximize individual student learning and performance. This paper reports findings from a study of student narratives completed following a case simulation. The results offer some insight on what students learned from the case simulation and how

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instructors might further enhance the classroom use of the case method in teaching organizational communication.

Defining Terms and Distinguishing Instructional Methods

Instructors have used case studies in teaching organizational communication for some time. This use is evidenced by the inclusion of cases in most textbooks on organizational communication. Instructors realize that students need to do more than read about and discuss organizational communication theories. Case studies serve a valuable purpose in demonstrating the theoretical concepts studied. Cases offer a view of "real world" situations and, therefore, provide students with an opportunity for critical thinking and problem solving. However, this use of case studies does not help students move from third person observer to first person participant. Optimal learning of organizational communication should encompass the ability to incorporate the organizational communication theories in one's own behavior.

Kowalski (1995) distinguishes between the case study and the case method. He defines case study as a general description of a situation and case method as the use of a case study as an instructional paradigm. The case study, unlike the lived experience, can be held still for examination (Florio-Ruane and Clark, 1990). Holding a "real world" situation still for critical analysis has some instructional value. Among the advantages of using case studies identified by Malouf (1993), the following benefits are most salient for teaching of organizational communication are: 1) involvement and interaction by students; 2) material can be covered in depth and detail; and 3) application of knowledge and skills is possible. The use of case studies, however, is not sufficient as an instructional methodology because it allows students to remain third person observers of "real world" issues. When students analyze case studies the focus remains on how the various case characters could have avoided the current

problem and what they should do to remedy the situation. This third person observer role limits student learning.

Effective teaching equips students with the knowledge and skills needed to function successfully in their professional life. Students need to internalize information and perfect skills essential to employment success. In my view, learning must encompass three phases: understanding, identification, and application. Students may understand theoretical material and not be able to identify the concepts in operation or apply the theory in their own practice. If courses in organizational communication are to have future relevance for students, they must be taught so that students internalize theoretical content and develop the communication skills essential for professional success. After analyzing a case study, students should practice implementing what they prescribe. This additional learning phase allows students to function as first person participants in the case situation.

It is beneficial to work systematically through all three learning phases with every unit. Depending on the complexity of the material, the first phase typically incudes assigned readings, lectures, written assignments, and class activities. The goal is to have students understand the concepts with a high degree of confidence. In phase two of the learning process, students identify the theoretical concepts in a "real world" context. In this phase, instructors might use case histories, press clippings, corporate artifacts, and other illustrative documents. The objective is for students to be able to identify theoretical concepts in operation, analyze their effectiveness, and hypothesize how to alter outcomes through planned intervention. Phase three of this instructional model is the hardest to employ, but the most important for long-term learning. The objective is for students to apply and use the theoretical concepts learned in credible "real world" simulations. In addition to the knowledge and critical thinking skills acquired in the first two phases, this phase requires a strong skill

component because students need to be able to ***use*** what they know which is more difficult than ***explaining*** what they know on a test or in a paper. In phase three, students become first person participants which is much harder than the third person critic view they use when analyzing a case study. Phase three moves from case study to case simulation, an instructional strategy that exemplifies the case method. The case or simulation combines case study and role play.

Merseth (1991) contends that the case method: 1) helps students develop skills of critical analysis and problem solving; 2) encourages reflective practice and deliberate action; 3) brings reality into the arena of theory; 4) involves students in their own learning; and 5) promotes the creation of a community of learners. Kowalski (1995) contends that the case method is a tool that bridges theory with practice, develops skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, and decision making, and allows for practice reflection in a professional role. The one clear advantage of case method or case simulation that is not inherent in the use of case study is that students learn what it is like to use organizational communication theories. The case method forces students to move from a third person perspective in which they prescribe what the characters in the case situation should do to a first person perspective in which they must implement the action they recommend.

Using Case Simulation Effectively

Case simulation helps students improve their communication skills and sharpen their sensitivity to those organizational factors which can either facilitate or hinder their ultimate achievements (Higgerson & Rehwaldt, 1993). Case simulation provides students with an opportunity to learn from the experience of others in a risk-free environment and accelerate the type of learning that typically accompanies professional work experience (Higgerson, 1996). For this benefit to be fully realized, however, the case simulation must satisfy the following criteria:

1. The case situation must be credible. While it does not need to be a true case, the case situation and characters must be believable. Students will invest more in the case simulation if they recognize that the situation is one that they may encounter in the "real world."
2. The case simulation needs to be sufficiently complex so that students have facts to discover and issues to analyze. By writing one's own case simulation, it is easier to include the theoretical concepts to be taught and build in the values and decisions that are relevant to the specific instructional objectives.
3. The facts of the case are not all detailed in the initial assignment. Seldom in "real world" situations are all the facts easily discernible and located in one document. An effective case simulation allows students to decide what they need to know and how to obtain that information.
4. Students remain active participants and do not slip into the comfortable third person observer role. The instructor can help by assuming a role in the case situation and by monitoring the group process throughout the case simulation.
5. The case simulation debrief must include an evaluation of the students' communication skills as well as the students' analysis of the case situation. Ideally, instructors need to help students learn how to evaluate their own performance in the case simulation.

Students are more likely to take the case simulation seriously when it satisfies these criteria.

Using case simulation effectively requires that the instructor remain involved in the process. The instructor's role will vacillate between case character(s) and instructor. If, for example, a group wants to meet with the corporate CEO, the instructor becomes the corporate CEO. In these instances, it is helpful to make the meeting as realistic as possible. The instructor can set the tone by scheduling the meeting in a conference room and assuming the persona of the CEO upon entering the room. At

other times, the instructor needs to serve as the coach who monitors the group's progress and offers immediate feedback on how the group is doing. Case simulation does not work without the effective and continuous involvement of the instructor.

Purpose of this Study

I tell my students that the single best communication skill to master is the ability to be simultaneously a first person participant and a third person observer. It is, therefore, important for me as an instructor to provide learning situations in which students can practice this skill. Case simulations provide this opportunity, and students in my classes seem enjoy case simulations. The more complex the case simulation, the more students seem to enjoy the process. While there is some comfort in knowing that one's class is well received and that students enjoy the challenges placed before them, it is also important to know whether the case simulation serves its intended instructional purpose.

This study was conducted to determine if, and more specifically what, students learn from case simulations used in two of the organizational communication courses that I teach. More specifically, this study was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. Do students believe that case simulations help them understand the theoretical content studied in the course?
2. Are students able to assume a professional role in the case simulation?
3. Are students able to practice "real world" organizational communication skills in the case simulation?
4. What do students believe they learn from the case study simulation?
5. Does case simulation help students build confidence for managing similar situations?

Simulation Process and Research Method

Seniors and graduate students enrolled in two different 400-level courses taught in the Department of Speech Communication at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale (SIUC) were the subjects for this study. Course A was a 400-level organizational communication course with a study focus on leadership and change. Course B was a 400-level organizational communication course on consulting. This researcher was the instructor for both courses.

Students in both classes engaged in a detailed case simulation that required them to work in small groups to analyze the case, develop a method for managing the case situation, and present their conclusions to the specific characters in the case study. In other words, students did not make a presentation to the course instructor and classmates, but rather to the characters described in the case. The case roles were played by the course instructor and other students in the class.

A different case study was used in each class because the case selected complemented the subject matter covered in the class and each course dealt with a different topic. The case used in course A is presented in appendix A and the case used in course B can be found in Appendix B of this paper. Both cases required students to communicate with characters in the case simulation. For example, some groups in course A decided to obtain more information by writing President Peterson and other groups scheduled a meeting with Dr. Peterson. In all instances, the course instructor played the role of Dr. Peterson. Similarly, the instructor assumed the role of Anne Wieczorek for students working on the case simulation used in course B.

Students structured their own team and work process. As a result, no two groups reached identical conclusions or made similar presentations. In all instances, the group product was tailored to the case situation as they assessed and experienced it. Since their assessment derived from their communication with the key characters in the case study, each group formed somewhat different conclusions. While the

instructor was careful to project the same personality for the main characters, the groups did not approach the characters in the same manner. Dr. Peterson, for example, grew impatience with groups who implied in their communication that he was somehow negligent in his handling of the immediate situation. Groups who were more diplomatic in their communication with Dr. Peterson found him to be more congenial and disclosing in his comments.

The case simulation required students to apply their understanding of organizational communication at three levels. First, students needed to analyze and devise a solution to the case study situation. Second, students needed to assess and adapt their communication to the "live" personalities of the key case situation characters. Third, students needed to apply their understanding of organizational communication to the group process. The case simulation went beyond the instructional value accrued in case study analysis because it provided students with an opportunity to practice and critically analyze their own behavior in working with a team to manage a complex task. Hence, the simulation process was as close to "real world" experience as is possible in the classroom setting.

At the conclusion of the case study simulation, students were asked to assess the value of the case simulation as an instructional method on an open-ended survey instrument. To allow students an opportunity to provide a reflective response, the instructor asked students to return the completed survey instruments at the next class session. A total of 14 students from course A and 21 students from course B completed and returned the survey instrument.

Findings

A complete summary of responses obtained from students in courses A and B are presented in appendices C and D. The responses received from the students in

each class were similar. Consequently, the students in both classes will be treated as one subject population for the purpose of this discussion.

When asked if the case simulation helped students understand the theoretical concepts studied in the course (Question 1), 91 percent of the students responded "yes" or "definitely." Most added statements that indicated they found the case simulation to be a very valuable instructional experience because it provided an opportunity to reflect on the theoretical concepts and to observe their function in a realistic situation. Six percent of the student population (two students) reported that the case simulation was "helpful" but did not express the same enthusiasm for the personal benefit obtained. Only one student (3 percent of the population) said that the case did not help him or her understand the theoretical concepts because there was "not enough time" to do the activity.

For a case simulation to be maximally effective students must assume a professional posture in working through the simulation. When asked if they were able to assume a professional role in the case simulation (question 2), 89 percent of the students said "yes" or "definitely." Three students (9 percent of the population) reported having some difficulty assuming a professional role due to the dynamics of their group and one student (3 percent of the population) said that worry over the grade prevented him/her from assuming a professional role.

Question 3 of the self-report survey instrument asked students to list the "real world" organizational skills that the case simulation allowed them to practice. Most of the students listed no fewer than five specific skills. The collective response yielded a long list for each course (see appendices C and D). The specific items listed can be grouped into five primary skill areas: leadership skills; organizational skills; analytical skills; interpersonal communication skills; and written communication skills. Students practice more skills than targeted in the learning objectives for the course.

Students were also asked to tell what they learned from the case simulation (question 4). These responses differed from the list of skills practiced in that students tended to offer conclusions they made based on their experience in the case simulation. The conclusions ranged from specific to general and from personal to more generalizable observations. For example, some students talked about how it was easier (and better) to watch their language than to repair misunderstandings. Others described how hard it is to work with diverse groups and to motivate some group members to assume responsibility for the project. The students who drew more general conclusions made such observations as the importance of planning to the overall project and that group work goes better when there is consensus about the what the task entails. Typically students drew conclusions that derived from their role in the case simulation and several made conclusions about how they individually can best contribute to a group process.

Question 5 asked students to report whether they believed they would be more effective in managing a situation similar. All but one student (97 percent of the population) responded with "yes" or "definitely." The one student who was doubtful responded by saying "I hope so" and added that he/she hoped to have learned how "not to make mistakes and how to gain credibility and gain better perception form others." The case simulation helped students become more confident in their ability to manage a similar situation.

Conclusions

Based on student self reports in two different 400-level courses in organizational communication, the case method when employed as a case simulation helps students learn and develop professional skills. The findings of this study lend support to the belief that students benefit from the case method which combines case study and role play or some other interactive experience. When these instructional

techniques were combined in a case simulation, students reported that the activity bolstered their confidence and enhanced their professional skills.

This study does not provide a basis for eliminating case study analysis. Indeed, the use of case studies in organizational communication courses is an important step in preparing students for work on case simulations. Only after students understand the theoretical concepts (phase one) and can recognize them in a case situation (phase two) can instructors move to phase three of the learning process which requires students to use the theoretical concepts in a "real world" context.

The findings of this study suggest avenues for more research. First, the study should be replicated in more courses with more students. While the responses received from students in two different courses employing two different case simulations are similar, the total N size of 35 is hardly decisive. The process of collecting student self reports should be continued both as a means of verifying the results of this study and as a means of obtaining valuable feedback on the student-perceived merit of any case simulation.

Second, there is a need to compare students' self-report assessments with instructor assessments of what students learn from a case simulation. Students may not be the best judge of what they have learned. Nevertheless, it is important that students perceive themselves as learning and gaining confidence because, in reality, the instructor's assessment of what a student has learned is overshadowed by whether or not that student has the confidence to put the learning to use.

Third, there is a need to study the value of using case simulations for long-term learning. Do students find the experience useful after longer periods of time? In this study, students evaluated the case simulation at the end of the semester. There is a need to know if these students still perceive the case simulation as a valuable instructional methodology one or more years later. It would also be useful to learn the

specific ways in which a case simulation may benefit students in their professional experience.

Fourth, there is a need to study the scope and effectiveness of case simulation as an instructional method. Students in this study reported learning in five primary skill areas: leadership skills, organizational skills, analytical skills, interpersonal skills, and written communication skills. This list is more comprehensive than the instructional objectives may be for any single course. If case simulation proves to be a vehicle for teaching multiple and complex skill areas it may be used effectively in interdisciplinary courses or to assess student mastery of core program objectives.

The case simulation which combines case study and role play is an important tool for teaching organizational communication. Case simulations help students internalize the theoretical concepts and provide meaningful opportunities for skill development. The next step is to research more precisely the nature and limits of this instructional method.

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Appendix A

12

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About the Case

From childhood through adulthood, at home and at work, people make decisions which they believe will solve certain problems. Short-term solutions often must be revisited when the problem erupts again. Long-term solutions generally focus on creating an environment or enforcing a policy aimed at eliminating a problem or at least keeping it from resurfacing soon. Sometimes a short-term solution is all that is needed—at that point in time. For example, a quick trip to the local hardware store to purchase a fuse may solve an immediate household emergency. Sooner or later, however, a longer-term solution to the endemic electrical problems of the house may have to be considered so that the homeowners' life does not become a series of quick-fixes ignoring the real and inherent danger of the larger problem.

CASE STUDY

Hillsborough College enjoys a very proud tradition. This private four-year college was founded in 1850 for the purpose of providing a Christian education to male and female students of all races. From its humble beginning, Hillsborough College was perceived as a progressive institution of higher education. Because Hillsborough's original charter was so forward thinking, the leadership at Hillsborough felt spared of any responsibility when affirmative action policies began sweeping institutions of higher education across the nation in the 1970s. After all, how could racial or gender prejudice exist at a college that had been so progressive for more than a century?

Under the leadership of President Lars Peterson, Hillsborough College was content to safeguard the status quo. Women and minority

Taken from Higgerson, Mary Lou & Rehwaldt, Susan S. (1993). *Complexities in Higher Education Administration:: Case Studies and Issues.* Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing.

applicants were considered for admission to Hillsborough College as they had always been since its doors opened in 1850. President Peterson believed that the implementation of any special policy targeted to accelerate the recruitment of women and minority students would somehow indict the original integrity of the college. As he once told the institution's governing board, "No special consideration needs to be given to women and minority applicants now because fair consideration has always been given to women and minority applicants and students at Hillsborough College."

Hillsborough College has an enrollment of roughly 4,000 students. Students receive a strong, traditional liberal arts education. While applications for admission are accepted nationwide, most students attending Hillsborough College usually came from the northern Midwest within a radius of 300 miles of the college.

While the college leadership recognized that the enrollment of women and minority students at Hillsborough College was low, this fact was attributed to a belief that women and minority students were more anxious to attend institutions offering technical or more career-oriented associate and baccalaureate degrees. The traditional liberal arts education offered by Hillsborough College was most appropriate for very bright students planning to pursue graduate education. Consequently, the enrollment profile for Hillsborough College did not mirror that region's population demographics, but did not concern the leadership of the college. Without exception, the minority students attending Hillsborough College did so with the support of major scholarship funds.

President Peterson believed that Hillsborough College was, and always had been, an integrated campus. During his 20 years as president, Dr. Peterson had experienced little evidence of racial tension. Occasionally, parents would call to complain when their son or daughter had been assigned a roommate of a different race. Usually, these matters only surfaced when there was an uneven number of minority men or women attending the college and a minority student was paired with a nonminority student in the freshmen residence hall.

Still, President Peterson found that these situations were easily remedied. Hillsborough, like most institutions experienced a modest attrition within the first month of each new academic year. Consequently, it was not difficult to reassign roommates after the first few weeks of the term in a manner that averted any racial difficulties, and it was always possible to give someone a single room, if absolutely necessary.

Minority Faculty Numbers. Two years ago, a small group of minority students had requested a meeting with the president to discuss what they perceived to be a shortage of minority faculty at the college. The students expressed a concern that only three of the college's 200 or so

faculty were minority. These three faculty taught courses in cultural pluralism and Afro-American studies, new courses recently added to Hillsborough's mandated distribution requirements.

Dr. Peterson recalled how impressed he was by the students' professional dress and manner as they expressed their concerns to him. They discussed the matter for over an hour and Dr. Peterson remembered vividly how well the students listened to his account of the university's history and perspective. Dr. Peterson had assured the students that Hillsborough would prefer to have more minority faculty and that he hoped more minorities would apply for open faculty positions in the future. The session ended cordially.

Tenure Difficulties. Last year, however, a larger group of minority students visited Dr. Peterson when he announced that one of the three minority faculty would not be granted tenure. President Peterson saw this as a tougher situation because he found it more difficult to explain the institution's tenure policy to these students.

Because there was not a department of "cultural pluralism" or "Afro-American studies" at Hillsborough, faculty teaching these courses held tenure-track positions in one of the more traditional disciplines. The faculty member being denied tenure had his appointment in the department of history. His faculty colleagues in that department voted against his tenure because there was insufficient documentation of continued work in the more traditional discipline of history.

While Dr. Peterson could understand the students' complaint that a faculty member teaching courses in cultural pluralism or Afro-American studies should not be penalized, he stood fast on the need to uphold the Hillsborough's high standard for faculty excellence in the traditional disciplines of the liberal arts. Finally, after two separate one-hour meetings, President Peterson felt confident that the students, though disappointed, understood the larger institutional issue. Dr. Peterson assured the students that every effort would be made to replace the departing minority faculty member with another minority scholar.

Romeo, Romeo. These two seemingly isolated issues during the past two years did not give Dr. Peterson reason for alarm. Consequently, Dr. Peterson was totally surprised and caught off-guard by the events of the past few months.

As usual, the theatre department held auditions in mid-September to cast the annual fall production. This year, the theatre department was scheduled to bring to the college stage a production of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. The play's direction was assigned by the department chair to a new non-minority faculty member who had been recruited from a prestigious private college in the Northeast. After a week of auditions

and call-backs, the cast was selected and the list was posted. The leading role of Juliet was given to Christine Utgaard, a senior theatre major whose talents had been enjoyed by patrons of the Hillsborough College Theatre for three years. This was no surprise as everyone expected that Christine would be cast as Juliet.

The new faculty member, however, sent shock waves through the Hillsborough College community when he cast an Afro-American male student, Trevone Smith, as Romeo. Trevone was a junior theatre major already recognized as having significant talent. However, he had not been cast in many productions while a student at Hillsborough College because previous faculty directors believed it inappropriate to cast Trevone in such ethnic productions as *Fiddler on the Roof, Brigadoon,* or *I Remember Mama.* Trevone had impressed the audiences, literally bringing down the house, with his performance as Judd, the crazed bad guy, in a recent production of *Oklahoma.*

While the other theatre faculty were surprised by the casting of Trevone in the role of Romeo, they also acknowledged that he was the most talented male student actor on campus. Christine helped ease the theatre faculty's concern when she projected her instant agreement with the selection of Trevone as Romeo. The chair of the theatre department was greatly relieved, but still decided to alert the Hillsborough's administration to the fact that this year's production of *Romeo and Juliet* would be an interracial production.

President Peterson counseled the department chair to have a talk with the new faculty member to help him understand the need to be more sensitive to the Midwestern culture surrounding the Hillsborough College campus. He advised the chair to join him in treating the forthcoming production as "business as usual." There was to be no special publicity. From President Peterson's point of view, it was important to get through the production run—scheduled for the first week in December—without a lot of publicity and to insure more responsible choices in future casting decisions.

Let's pause here. . .

1. *How would you evaluate the president's action regarding the interracial production of* Romeo and Juliet? *Assume the role of President Peterson and describe how you would have handled the discussion with the theatre department chair. If you were the president, would you have responded differently?*
2. *How would you assess the racial climate at Hillsborough College? Does the institution's handling of complaints about roommates offer any insight into the campus climate for minorities? What about the president's personal biases? Specify the basis for your conclusion. Be certain to distinguish between fact and inference.*

3. *Was the new faculty member out of line to cast an interracial production of* Romeo and Juliet? *Was the department chair negligent in not providing more supervision over the new faculty member during his first term at the college? How does the issue of academic freedom enter this situation?*

The Rehearsals. The department chair agreed to comply with the president's suggestions. However, he decided to postpone his discussion with the faculty director until after *Romeo and Juliet* had completed its run. Everything appeared to be under control until non-cast members started attending the rehearsals. With a small number of theatre majors on the campus, the department often recruited volunteers from the total Hillsborough student population to help with everything from publicity, props and set construction, to box office management. These opportunities for professional experience were deemed to be important for students in other majors. Students majoring in business would help with marketing strategies and advertising, as well as with box office receipts. Students majoring in history would help with the design of period costumes and props. Hence, when non-theatre majors started attending rehearsals, no one was surprised or alarmed.

Faculty present at the rehearsal noticed that the non-major volunteer students were, in general, louder and more disruptive during the rehearsals than they had been in previous years. Still, the behavior was viewed as excessive enthusiasm for the start of a new year and pretty much ignored by the faculty working on the lights and sets. It was not until Trevone and Christine began to rehearse the scene in which they first embrace that a group of white male students transformed their presence from one of annoyance into total disruption. Within minutes, the shouting from the back of the theatre turned the auditorium into a brawl instigated by the hecklers and involving all students present. Faculty had misjudged the amount of tension that had been building and that was released when the overt heckling started.

With the help of campus security and faculty, the fight was brought under control. The next afternoon, all those who were present at the rehearsal the evening before, including those who had participated in the brawl, found themselves seated before the president. President Peterson expressed his outrage and severe disappointment at their behavior and made it clear that this would not happen again. After a full 30-minute lecture, the group was dismissed to return to their residence halls.

A group of theatre majors, however, remained to have a different conversation with the president. This group of students urged the president to take action against those who had heckled and started the fight by suspending them for exhibiting obvious racial prejudice. Their posture

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surprised the president who had the distinct impression that he was the one being lectured to on how to behave.

He told them that the negative publicity over such a suspension would be harmful to Hillsborough's reputation. After all, Hillsborough College had always had an open door for women and minorities. This single incident of poor judgment on the part of a few was not sufficient reason to tarnish the college's fine reputation. Besides, President Peterson pointed out that some of those who would be first in line for suspension were seniors. In his mind, he explained, it would not be fair to ruin their educational opportunities at Hillsborough College on the basis of one incident.

Let's pause again. . .

4. *With the advantage of hindsight, consider if the president was correctly reading the earlier episodes with students. What could the president have done one and two years earlier that might have diffused the racial tension that eventually exploded with the casting of an Afro-American student in the college's production of* Romeo and Juliet?
5. *Do you agree with the president's treatment of the most recent episode? If not, specify how you would have handled the situation. What risk was the president taking by his actions to protect Hillsborough's reputation and image, as he saw the need? Was the trade-off worth the risk?*

The Rehearsals Continue. In the two weeks that followed, the situation escalated. Trevone received almost daily threats to leave the production and the school. Christine, too, received threats of physical harm, most with sexual overtones, if she performed in this interracial production of *Romeo and Juliet* as part of an interracial couple. The faculty director came home one day to find that the trash can outside his home had been set on fire. He too had received several pieces of hate mail suggesting he return to the Northeast before either he or his family was harmed.

The same group of theatre majors, this time accompanied by the faculty director, again talked with President Peterson. They showed the president samples of the hate mail they had received and told of the harassing incidents they all had experienced. The president listened, but remained firm in his belief that he could not place this one incident ahead of the total welfare of the institution. He did suggest as an alternative that the theatre department cancel the show or recast it. The group took great exception to this because all believed that Trevone was the most qualified actor and deserved to play Romeo. How better, they argued, could they illustrate the perceived "inappropriateness" of a Montague and a Capulet falling in

love? They further believed that the theatre department would be shirking its educational responsibility to Trevone and others if it succumbed to this racial prejudice.

In one heated moment, the faculty director admonished the president by saying that a true liberal education taught students to resist racial prejudice. The president retorted that this was an easier process when new faculty took the time to learn and be sensitive to the culture within which they were working rather than expecting all cultures to adjust to their imported views. After two hours, the group left with the full realization that President Peterson did not intend to take any action.

The Show Must Go On. Confronted with the choice of canceling the show, recasting it, or proceeding as planned, the group decided unanimously to proceed as scheduled. At the final dress rehearsal that evening, the scene was tense. Instead of heckling or shouting, a large number of visitors and volunteers remained in the back of the theatre and watched the rehearsal in disapproving silence.

The next morning the first faculty member to arrive at the theatre found the set demolished. The stage curtains were slashed, furniture and props were broken, and paint had been poured over the costumes. Later it was discovered that paint had also been dumped on Trevone's car and on the new van of the play's director.

President Peterson met with the theatre faculty to evaluate the situation. Upon surveying the damage, the president elected to cancel the production indefinitely. Now, as he reflected on the events that led up to yesterday's decision, he had deep regrets. Although relieved that Hillsborough's footlights would not illuminate an interracial love story, he was, nevertheless, apprehensive about the violence that brought about the cancellation.

Then, the exodus began. Throughout the day, a few at a time, the college's minority students left the campus in protest of the actions of the administration and fearful for their safety. In addition, several of the nonminority students majoring in theatre who had also received threats for participating in the interracial production of *Romeo and Juliet* had also gone home. The vandalism put the college on the front pages of newspapers in regions where Hillsborough College was virtually an unknown entity. And news of the students' subsequent departures would provide fodder for a follow-up story.

President Peterson sat in his office and began to re-evaluate his posture on the incidents that led up to the destruction in the theatre. He also considered what might be done to restore racial peace at Hillsborough College and to encourage the minority students to return to campus. Moreover, steps had to be taken to ensure that this episode did not hurt the future recruitment of minority students and faculty at Hillsborough

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College. And he needed to restore the public's faith in the college as a strong liberal arts institution founded and truly committed to providing an education to students of all races.

A final pause. . .

6. *Assume the role of the president and devise a strategy for dealing with this situation. For starters, prepare a press release on the forced cancellation of the college's production of* Romeo and Juliet.
7. *Assume the role of the college president and field the following questions from the media regarding the exodus of minority students from Hillsborough:*
   a. *"President Peterson, how do you explain what has happened at Hillsborough?"*
   b. *"President Peterson, did you have any indication of the amount of racial tension generated on campus by the casting of the roles of* Romeo and Juliet*?"*
   c. *"President Peterson, is it true that all of the minority students have left the campus either as a protest against Hillsborough or in fear of their personal safety?"*
   d. *"President Peterson, how does Hillsborough plan to respond to this sad episode in the institution's history?"*
8. *Looking to the future, specify your strategy for*
   a. *persuading the departed students to return to Hillsborough College, students who are not likely to return unless convinced that the climate will be different for members of racial minorities;*
   b. *improving the campus climate for minorities and demonstrating a positive change to students, faculty, and the general public;*
   c. *controlling the damage that might have been done to future recruitment efforts; and*
   d. *preventing similar incidents in the future.*
9. *You realize that, as president, you need to telephone Trevone Smith, among others. What are you going to say to Trevone? Who else will you call?*

Appendix B

South Central State University
Anywhere, USA 81093

Office of the Provost
Suite 925
Administration Building

May 20, 1997

Consulting Firm
Carbondale, Illinois 62901

Dear President (*fill in name*):

I am writing to inquire how your firm might help with a new challenge facing our institution. Our state Board of Higher Education has mandated that all public institutions begin assessing student learning outcomes with the coming academic year. Data collection is to begin with spring semester 1998.

This is a difficult timetable for us for several reasons. First, our faculty hold nine-month contracts and, therefore, have no obligation to be in town or on campus during the summer months. This means that we cannot involve faculty in campus-wide planning for assessment until the fall semester. Second, we would need to design, test, and implement our assessment program this fall in order to be able to collect data during spring semester 1998. We are a large, comprehensive campus and university-wide initiatives take considerable time to plan and execute. Third, we anticipate that faculty and staff will resist this newest mandate from the state Board. The general perception among faculty and staff throughout the state is that the state Board micromanages higher education and holds institutions accountable for every action and expenditure.

I am asking your firm to develop a written proposal of how we might work with college deans and department chairs to implement an assessment program. You should know that I am seeking proposals from a number of consulting firms. I will need to receive your proposal by May 27. After reviewing the proposals, I will set up a meeting to discuss your idea for managing this initiative. If selected, I am hopeful that you could work with our deans and department chairs on June 2, 1997. I am, of course, available to answer any questions you might have about this project.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Anne Wieczorek
Provost

Appendix C
Data Summary

Responses from students enrolled in SPCM 483 (Course A) N=14

1. Did the case study simulation help you understand the theoretical concepts studied in the course? Explain how.

12 said "yes" or "definitely" and most added that the case study simulation "allowed better insight and understanding," "illustrated the material in a different light," "helped me integrate the course material" in our group work and presentation, "put class concepts into practice," or "let me use the concepts from the books we read."
1 said it was "helpful" but added that he/she was a "text/discussion student" and that he/she "understood the concepts before the simulation."
1 said "sort of" and added that he/she learned more from all his/her speech courses "put together than just the one simulation."

2. Were you able to assume a professional role in the case study simulation? If not, please explain why.

12 said "yes" or "definitely" and many added that the groups took the project "very seriously." Some commented on having the opportunity to "use" communication skills and how the case study simulation put them in a "professional role" which gave them a "very different mindset."
1 said "to a certain extent" and added that too many group members were "concerned about the grade."
1 said "yes and no" and added that a "some members of the group took it upon themselves to make all of the decisions."

3. Did the case study simulation allow you to practice "real world" organizational communication skills? Please list the skills you practiced.

14 said "yes" and the skills listed included: leadership, consensus building, working with a group, organizing meetings, planning, interpersonal communication, listening, persuasion, credibility, management styles, analytical thinking, conflict management, public speaking, small group communication, brainstorming, communicating vision, recognizing organizational values, developing and organizational culture, appropriate language use, inclusion, and gaining cooperation.

4. What did you learn from the case study simulation? Please give specific examples if possible.

The following themes were present in the student responses:

Working with a diverse group is not easy.
Don't assume that others have skills and abilities that they may not have.
It is better to manage conflict than to ignore it.
It is harder to recover from mistakes so planning is important.
If you expect good work from others they will deliver.
It pays to analyze the organizational culture before tackling the immediate problem.
Every group will have members who want to take charge and members who prefer to have everything done for them.
Watching your language and communication when working with team members can prevent conflict.

Several of the students added that they learned more about themselves and the way in which they can best contribute to group work.

5. Do you believe that you will be more effective in managing situations similar to that addressed in the case study simulation because of this class experience?

13 said "yes" or "definitely" and several explained their response by adding such statements as:

"My knowledge about organizational communication grew, and I think I grew as a person."
"My communication skills are much improved."
"I'm more confident in dealing with management problems and job related crises that might arise in the business world."
"I feel this class and case study is the most useful thing I have learned while in college. Instead of just learning the material we put it in action within the case study."
"While my group was presenting, I was thinking about how I could actually do something like this in real life."

1 said "I hope so" and added that he/she hoped to have learned how "not to make mistakes and how to gain credibility and gain better perception from others."

Appendix D
Data Summary

Responses from students enrolled in SPCM 493 (Course B) N=21

1. Did the case study simulation help you understand the theoretical concepts studied in the course? Explain how.

20 said "yes" and several added that the case study simulation provided an "opportunity to reflect on theories/suggestions in the text . . and critique and compare against what we were doing" or that they "learn the best when given concepts in a hands-on situation."
1 said "no" and added that the group "didn't have enough time to apply them."

2. Were you able to assume a professional role in the case study simulation? If not, please explain why.

19 said "yes" or "definitely" and some added that they were "really surprised by how the group approached this simulation" and several added that it was "very easy to assume a professional role."
1 said "not as much as I would have liked to" and added that it was "due to the group dynamics."
1 said he/she had "difficulty separating myself from the role of student and worry over the grade."

3. Did the case study simulation allow you to practice "real world" organizational communication skills? Please list the skills you practiced.

21 said "yes" and the skills listed included: leadership, consensus building, working with a group, organizing meetings, research and planning, interpersonal communication, listening, persuasion, credibility, management styles, analytical thinking, conflict management, presentational skills, small group communication, brainstorming, change, writing and editing, recognizing organizational values, developing and organizational culture, team building, appropriate language use, inclusion, and gaining cooperation.

4. What did you learn from the case study simulation? Please give specific examples if possible.

The following themes were present in the student responses:
Groups dynamics is a major factor in group productivity.
Working with a diverse group is not easy.
It is better to manage conflict than to ignore it.
How to put several divergent ideas together to develop a coherent plan.

It pays to analyze the organizational culture before tackling the immediate problem.
How to structure an effective proposal.
Insight into the group process is key to gaining cooperation.
Knowledge of communication is essential to working with others in a professional role.
Groups members have different perceptions about what "pulling one's own weight" means.
Multiple perspectives in a group leads to a better product.

Several of the students added that they learned more about themselves and how they can best contribute to group work.

5. Do you believe that you will be more effective in managing situations similar to that addressed in the case study simulation because of this class experience?

21 said "yes" or "definitely" and several explained their response by adding such statements as:

"I learned that the key to solving problems is determining what the real problem is as opposed to what one thinks the problem is."
"At first I wasn't sure how to approach any of this. I now know that if I'm handed a problem like this, I can handle it."
"Good practical experience handling a tough situation."
"I now know I need to look at things from many angles and get others' perspectives."
"I believe I am more prepared to work with different individuals."
"I feel more confident about my communication skills in working with others."